

Tales from Indian Mythology Series — I

DAŚAVATAR

526

BY

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DASAVATAR

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ஹிந்து மதாபிமான சங்கம்
காரைக்குடி.

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தாமதி ருஷ்ண

விவேகானந்தர் சங்கம்

காரைக்குடி.

நன்கொடையாளர் A.R. சி. பி. மணிபன்
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DEDICATED
TO
MY MOTHER

Without whose help neither this nor
any of my books could have been written.

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*"The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed,
a refuge in times of trouble."*



DASAVATAR

I. MATSYAVATAR

Long long ago, the god Narayana is said to have created the whole Universe. He also created both gods and men and appointed many kings to rule over them. One of his chief assistants was Brahma who chanted the four Vedas.

The Vedas tell the world of the greatness of the Creator; and guide mortals and immortals in their behaviour towards Him.



MATSYAVATAR

They also tell of rewards to the righteous and of severe punishments to evil-doers. All the worlds obeyed the Vedas, and Narayana was able to carry on his work of creation and preservation very easily. But soon there came a time for him to reveal to the world his destructive powers.

There was living in those days an Asura by name Madhu. He was so strong and powerful that he could attack even the lesser gods and defeat them. At last he became very jealous of Brahma himself, because he commanded the whole world with his mighty Vedas. Madhu, one day, stole all the four Vedas from

Brahma while he was asleep, and hid himself under the ocean. Brahma became very perplexed, because he was not able to carry on his work of creation, without the aid of the Vedas. The residents of all the worlds became very irreligious. Everybody forgot his respective duties and committed many sins. The blood-thirsty Rakshasas worked havoc everywhere.

All the pious Sages and Devas headed by Brahma prayed to Narayana to come to their rescue. Being pleased with their devout prayers, he became incarnate as a huge man-fish and dived into the ocean. The man-fish was of

immeasurable length and breadth and of a golden colour. All the Devas admired its great beauty.

This fish wrestled with the demon Madhu for many years and at last slew him. Then the golden fish reappeared from the midst of the ocean embracing the four Vedas in its four hands. All the celestials sang hymns in praise of Vishnu and his mighty deeds. The four Vedas were given to Brahma again, and every one led a comfortable and religious life.

2. KOORMAVATAR

Once upon a time Devendra, the King of the lesser gods, lost all his wealth and power, on account of his haughty behaviour towards a sage. For this reason Vritrasura, a demon-king usurped his throne, and with his mighty army of Asuras oppressed both men and gods.

Being unable to bear the trouble caused by the demons all people prayed to Narayana saying "Oh, Lord, save us from the hands of the cruel Asuras. Help us in getting back Indra to his throne." Vishnu took pity on them and replied, "Do not fear; you must put the mount Mandara into the milk-ocean with the help

of the Asuras. Then use Vasuki the snake-king as a rope to churn the ocean, and you will get Amrita. If you drink it you will become immortals; then you can easily destroy the demons." The gods were satisfied with the answer of their Supreme God, and saluting him respectfully retired.

By means of cunning, they got the demons to help them to uproot the mount Mandara. Vasuki also was ready to help them. But both parties found that the bottom of the sea was not strong enough to bear the weight of the mountain. Again they prayed to Vishnu. To their great surprise he appeared before



KOORMAVATAR

them in the shape of a huge tortoise and ordered the parties to place the mountain on his strong back. Then the churning began.

After churning for some time Airavat, Goddess Lakshmi, the Halahala-visha and Kaustubha, the sea-jewel, rose from the sea. The last to rise was an old man known as Danvantari holding in his hand a golden cup filled with Amrita. But both parties were in such a great hurry to drink it, that again there was necessity for Narayana to appear in another form. He appeared in the form of a beautiful maiden known as Mohini. While the demons were admiring her beauty,

the gods drank the Amrita and became immortals. Then the demons were easily destroyed by the gods. Once again the worlds were happy and prosperous, and Indra was restored to power.

3. VARAHAVATAR

Once upon a time, a party of Munis sought admission into Vaikuntha. The door-keepers of Vishnu refused them admission. Then the Munis cursed them and said, "You shall be born as sons of Asuras and shall never be in favour with the Gods." The door-keepers bowed before them and said, "Venerable Munis, we refused to admit you because of our pride in being the servants of Vishnu himself. Be merciful to us and take away from us your curse so that we may not go down to the lower world and become mortals." The sages answered scornfully, "We cannot take away our curse. But we



VARAHAVATAR

will modify it ; you will have three births, and during that time you will be enemies of Vishnu. After that you will resume your original position in Vaikuntha." Accordingly they were born as Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksha. Both these Asuras became very powerful by means of their severe penance.

One day Hiranyaksha wanted to test his strength and power ; so he challenged Vishnu. He carried away the whole earth as if it were an orange, and hid himself in the Patala-loka. The goddess Earth who was enduring much suffering from him, began to chant hymns in praise of Vishnu : "Hail to thee ! Thou art

the Creator of all things, their preserver and their destroyer. Oh ! Govinda, in what way have I offended thee, so that I suffer at the hands of the demon ? I worship thee with great devotion, thou art my Saviour ; relieve me from my peril. Hail to thee again and again ! Hail ! all Hail ! !”

The mighty preserver of the world heard these hymns sung by the Earth. Immediately he took the form of a huge Boar. His body was like a dark mountain, his tusks were white, sharp and fearful ; his hoofs were like a mass of iron ; fire flashed from his eyes like lightning ; his roar

was like thunder, and his stride was like that of a fierce lion.

He challenged Hiranyaksha to fight, and a terrible conflict took place in which Hiranyaksha was slain. Then the Boar raised the earth from the Patala with his strong tusks, and placed it in its original position. The goddess Earth, the great sages, and all the people prostrated themselves before him and praised the upholder of the earth.

4. NARASIMHAVATAR

You have already read about Hiranyaksha. Now let us read about his elder brother Hiranyakasipu.

He meditated upon Brahma for thousands of years. The God was pleased with his hard Tapas and appearing before him blessed him, saying, "Well done, Hiranya, well done! You shall not be slain by any created being, and you shall be the lord of the three worlds."

Accordingly, he usurped the sovereignty of Indra and brought the sun, the moon, the air, the lord of waters and the lord of fire under his control. He also

took for himself, all that was offered in sacrifice to the gods. The Gandharvas praised him, and the snake-gods of the Patalaloka attended upon him. The Kinnaras played on musical instruments in his court, while the heavenly nymphs danced gracefully before him. The celestials were thus made his servants.

He had a son named Prahlada who was living at that time with his teacher. On one occasion he was brought by his teacher to the court of his father. Prahlada bowed before his father ; Hiranya lifted his son on to his lap and said, " My child, repeat what you have learnt from your Guru." " Yes, Sir," replied Prahlada. " I



NARASIMHAVATAR

will repeat the substance of all I have learned. I have learnt to love Him, the supreme Lord of the world, Vishnu." On hearing these words, Hiranya became very angry and said to the boy, "Why do you give the title of supreme Lord to any one else whilst I live? Who taught you all this?" "Vishnu, father!" answered Prahlada, "is the instructor of the whole universe. Why should any other teach me when there is that supreme Guru?"

"Away with the wretch," cried the king. "Kill him. He is not fit to live who is a traitor to his own race." His attendants at once snatched up their weapons and rushed upon Prahlada

to destroy him. But although they struck him hard and often, the prince felt not the least pain because of Vishnu. His father then embracing his son, kissed him on his forehead and promised that he would give him all sorts of playthings, eatables, and costly clothes provided he would only speak in praise of Hiranya and not of Vishnu. But Prahlada refused.

Hiranyakasipu was so angry, that he commanded the servants to kill his son, but they were not successful in their attempt. The young prince was then attacked by the state elephant, and he was also put into a huge fire, but nothing could destroy him. The

cooks put poison into his food, but it had no effect on him. He was hurled down from the top of a high mountain, and he fell cherishing Hari in his heart, and the Earth received him gently on her lap and nursed him. In the same way he was saved when he was thrown into the sea.

When Hiranya found that he could not harm his son in any way, he said, "You wretch! You always adore Vishnu, my deadly foe. Where is he? Who allowed him into my fortress? Let me see him." Although Prahlada was very angry at his father's abuse of Vishnu, he calmly bowed down to his father's feet, and replied, "My father!

That Hari whom you abuse in your wrath is everywhere. He is in you and in me. No place exists without Him."

When his father heard that, his face became red with fury, and he cried out, "If Vishnu is everywhere as you say, let me see him in this pillar."

At the same time he struck the pillar with his fists, when to the great terror of all the people, Vishnu in the form of half lion and half man came out from it. He tore Hiranyakasipu to pieces and drank his blood. Then he granted many favours to Prahlada, his devotee, and made him the sovereign of the Daitya race.

5. VAMANAVATAR

A descendant of Prahlada by name Mahabali was once ruling over the earth. His capital town was Mahabalipuram, otherwise known now as the Seven Pagodas. He was a capable and benevolent ruler, and his reign was a period of peace and plenty. He had already performed a course of ninety-nine Asvamedhas or horse-sacrifices. But his priest Sukra advised him to perform the hundredth sacrifice, so that he may ascend to Indra's throne. As a result of this he became very proud and oppressed both men and gods.

Indra went with his attendants to Vaikuntha. Saluting Vishnu



VAMANAVATAR

reverentially, he appealed to him saying, "Oh, Saviour of the weak ! Thou art the protector of all living beings. Save us from Mahabali who aspires to the throne of Indra and his riches." Vishnu replied, "Be no more alarmed. I will put an end to his pride."

Indra's mother who was living on the earth with Rishi Kasyapa, also prayed to Vishnu to save her son from Bali. At last Purushottama came down to the earth and was born as Vamana or the Dwarf, the son of Kas-yapa. Vamana learnt all the Vedas from his father and lived a saintly life.

Mahabali, under the guidance of his priest, was performing the hundredth horse-sacrifice. Vamana took this opportunity to crush his power. In the form of a short pious Brahmana boy with the sacred thread on his chest, and dressed in the skin of a deer, holding an umbrella and a Kamandala (water-pot) in his hands, Vamana went to the place where Mahabali was performing his Yaga.

Bali prostrated before the Brahmana youth, washed his feet and hands and offered him a seat with much respect. He said to him, "Learned Brahman! Please tell me the reason for your visit to my humble Yagasala. The

Brahmana youth replied, "Mighty king! I want you to give me a piece of land measuring exactly three paces, measured with my own foot, as I want to perform a religious ceremony." Bali readily granted his request.

But, Sukra, the family priest of Bali, said to him, "Oh king! Do not grant the piece of land: Vishnu himself has come down in this form to punish you. Be careful. Mind what I say." Bali became very angry with his Guru and said, "What! Do you advise me not to give the land when the great Lord himself comes to me? I should be very glad to offer Him everything I have; why, even my life." So he granted the Brahmana the land he wanted.

To the great terror of the world, Vamana stretched himself into a huge form, his head touched the sky and his feet rested on the lower world. All the residents of the world trembled at the transformed Visvarupam. One stride of the mighty form sufficed for the earth, another for the sky. For the third, Bali had to offer his head, and he was at once sent to Patala. But Mahabali rejoiced because he was so fortunate as to be touched by the feet of Vishnu, and so he prayed to Him most earnestly. Then Vishnu seeing his great devotion even while he was being punished, granted him a favour. He said, "Oh Bali ! You will get

Indra's throne in the near future. Until then go on chanting hymns in praise of me. I shall guard you from your enemies." So it is that Hari is acting the part of a door-keeper even to this day in the Patala-loka.

6. PARASURAMAVATAR

There was once a great sage named Dattatreya. His devoted disciple was Kartavirya. The Guru was pleased with his pupil, and granted him many favours such as a thousand arms, a golden chariot that would go wherever he wanted it to go, and victory over his enemies on all occasions. By these means he brought all the worlds under his sovereignty. He oppressed both men and gods to such an extent, that the gods had to apply to Vishnu to help them. So Vishnu descended to earth as Parasurama, the son of Jamadagni.



PARASURAMAVATAR

Jamadagni was a pious sage performing religious practices with his wife Renuka. One day when Renuka was going by a stream, she saw Chitraratha, the Gandharva prince, and his queen in the water and envied their happiness. By this unworthy thought she became less perfect than she used to be, and so Jamadagni wanted to get rid of her. He commanded his first three sons to kill Renuka, their own mother, but all of them refused. Lastly, the sage ordered his fourth son Rama saying, "Kill thy mother who has sinned, and do it, son, without any hesitation." Rama accordingly cut off his mother's

head. When he found that the sage was pleased with him, he begged him for some favours. They were the restoration of his mother to life, an increase of power in boxing, and a long life. All these were granted by his father.

It happened on one occasion, that the thousand-armed Kartavirya, came to the hermitage of Jamadagni, during the absence of the Rishi and his sons. He carried away the Sacred Cow Surabhi and its calf. When Rama returned, his mother told him what had happened, and he was filled with anger. Taking his Parasu (axe), he overtook the Haihaya King Kartavirya.

virya and slew him after a terrible battle. With the sharp axe he cut off his thousand arms. Thus the mighty Sovereign perished after governing the whole earth for eighty-five thousand years.

His sons, in their turn, attacked Jamadagni and slew him, when Rama was away in the forest. On his return home he found his father lifeless, and cried out bitterly : "Oh ! father, my dear father ! Who committed this sin ? Which fool murdered you ? The villains, the sons of Kartavirya ? Were you struck down, as a deer in the forest, by the huntsman's arrow ? What a shameless deed it is to

slay a solitary hermit, incapable of defending himself!" Thus lamenting, he lighted his funeral pile. He then made a vow that he would destroy mercilessly the whole Kshatriya race for twenty-one generations. In fulfilment of this purpose he took up his splendid Parasu and destroyed the sons of Kartavirya and other Kshatriyas. Thus he cleared the earth of the Kshatriya race.



RAMAVATAR

7. RAMAVATAR

You have already read about Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksha who were once the door-keepers of Vishnu. Now again for the second time, they were born as Ravana and Kumbhakarna.

You can see in your map the island called Ceylon or Lanka to the south of India. A number of terrible Rakshasas used to live in that island. Their King was the mighty Ravana. He was also called Dasagriva, for he had ten heads and twenty arms. On each head was a golden crown set with costly diamonds. He had a large army of brave soldiers and commanders. He had also obtained many blessings from

Brahma by performing severe penance. By these means he and his brother brought many a king under their control. All the lesser gods such as Indra, Varuna, the Sun, and the Moon, were made his servants. Neither gods nor men were safe in his kingdom. The immortals appealed to Narayana for relief, and He replied saying, "Oh, gods! I know that Ravana commits wicked deeds, and that there is a great fall of Dharma. Therefore I shall become incarnate as the four sons of Dasaratha and help you." The gods thanked Him respectfully, and went to Ayodhya, the capital of the kingdom of Dasaratha.

Dasaratha had four sons who were the incarnations of Vishnu. They were Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Satrughna. Rama, the eldest, was very brave, handsome and good. Lakshmana was very much attached to him. Visvamitra, a great Rishi, took them both from their father into the forest, and there they killed Subahu, a Rakshasa, and his mother Tataka.

Afterwards they went to Mithila, the capital of the kingdom of Janaka. There, Rama broke in two a mighty bow, and married Sita. His brothers also married three other princesses, and all of them returned to Ayodhya and lived very happily.

Some years after, Dasaratha in consultation with his ministers fixed a day for the Coronation of Rama. But, Kaikeyi, the second queen of Dasaratha, would not allow it, for she wanted her own son Bharata to get the throne. When Rama heard this, he calmly and cheerfully left the country for the forest followed by Sita and Lakshmana. They crossed the Ganges and the Jumna, and went to the abodes of Rishis as guests.

While he was halting at Chitrakūta hill he found that many wicked Rakshasas were roaming over the forest of Dandaka and causing much trouble to the Rishis there. Rama slew

a demon by name Viradha. Then he marched southwards hearing the complaints of many sages, and killing every Rakshasa he came across.

By this time they were very tired. So they stayed at Panchavati for some time. One day Surpanakha, a sister of Ravana, troubled Lakshmana very much; so he cut off her nose and ears and sent her away. Her brothers Khara, Dooshana and Trisiras brought their armies against the two princes. But Rama destroyed them very easily with his single bow.

Surpanakha then went to Ravana. She informed him of

the death of her brothers ; and told him about the great beauty of Sita. Ravana at once made up his mind to carry away Sita to his own palace. He induced his uncle Maricha to take Rama and Lakshmana farther and farther away from Sita by any means possible. Then Ravana went to Sita, disguised as an ascetic, seized her and fled to Lanka.

When the two princes returned, Sita was missing. They searched for her all around, but in vain. Directed by a vulture, they went southward to Sugriva, a monkey Prince, who, on account of a quarrel with his brother Vali, was taking refuge in a hill.

Rama killed Vali and crowned Sugriva king.

Sugriva sent his able commander Hanuman with a large army of monkeys to find out where Sita was. While Hanuman was proceeding southward he met a vulture named Sampati, who told him that Ravana had carried away Sita to Lanka. Hanuman jumped across the sea to the shores of Lanka, and there made a careful search for Sita. At last to his great joy he found her seated under an Asoka tree, weeping bitterly. He bowed before her and told her that Rama was safe and would soon set her free. Sita asked Hanuman more about Rama and his

brother, and then allowed him to return to Rama. Hanuman destroyed a large number of Rakshasas on the way back, and brought back the good news of the discovery of Sita to Rama.

The armies of Sugriva with the distinguished commanders crossed the sea and searched Lanka. The monkey-force attacked the Rakshasas and killed many of them. Rama and Lakshmana put to death many commanders including Kumbhakarna, the brother, and Indrajit, the son of Ravana. At last Ravana himself fought furiously and long with Rama, and to the great relief of the world, Ravana,

the mighty and wicked monarch was slain by Rama.

Sita and a number of other good ladies were set free. Vibhishana the Wise, the brother of Ravana, was put on the throne. Then Rama with his wife, brother and friends got into an ærial car and returned to Ayodhya. All the great sages and the famous kings, lords and commons, young and old, everyone without any distinction, welcomed them. Rama and Sita were placed on a richly decorated throne, and Vasishta placed the dazzling crown on the head of Rama amidst the blessings of hundreds of sages. Then Rama ruled over his country for many years, and everyone was very happy and contented.



KRISHNAVATAR

8. KRISHNAVATAR

The powerful Daityas were born once again upon earth, as men, as tyrants and oppressors. And so in order to check their violence, the gods had to descend again to the world of mortals. Kamsa, the son of Ugrasena, had many demon friends such as Dhenuka, Kesi, Naraka, Bakasura, Chanura, Mushtika, the fierce Jarasandha and others who tormented the world.

So at the request of the goddess Earth and other gods, Narayana appeared as the eighth son of Devaki.

Devaki was the sister of the mighty Kamsa. After the marri-

age of Devaki and Vasudeva Kamsa took them in his own chariot. But while driving he heard a voice saying, "Fool that you are, the eighth child of the damsel whom you are driving in your car will take away your life." On hearing this Kamsa drew his sword, and was about to put Devaki to death: but Vasudeva intervened saying, "Spare her life; I will deliver to you every child, that she has."

Accordingly many of their children were killed by Kamsa. But Vishnu became incarnate as Krishna the eighth child of Devaki. As soon as Krishna was born, Vasudeva took the babe that same night to the house of Nanda,

the cowherd. There he left Krishna, and took instead Yoganidra, the child of Nanda, and returned to Kamsa's mansion unobserved. He put this girl-baby in the place of Krishna.

The guard informed Kamsa of the birth of a new baby. Kamsa immediately came to the palace, and snatching up the baby from the hands of his sister threw it cruelly against a stone. But the child rose high in the sky and expanded into a gigantic figure. This terrible being said, "Why do you kill me? cruel Kamsa! Another is born who shall kill thee. Be prepared." Then the vision vanished from before the eyes of Kamsa.

He became very much alarmed. Narada, the pious sage, informed him of the existence of Krishna and his brother Balarama amidst the cowherds. Kamsa tried one plan after another to kill the baby Krishna.

On one occasion, while Krishna was playing in the street a demon named Chakatasura sent by Kamsa came in the form of a cart. Krishna playfully kicked it with his feet and overturned it, when the Asura assumed his original form and fell dead.

As the two boys Rama and Krishna grew up, they were always together in the same place and engaged in the same boyish

sports. They decorated themselves with flowery garlands and peacock's plumes, and played on the flute together with the other young cowherds. One day, when all the children were dancing on the banks of the Jumna, one boy told Krishna that there was a snake-king called Kalinga in a particular place under the waters. The water was boiling with the fire of its poison, by the fumes of which, large trees upon the banks were blighted and birds scorched. Madhusudana bound his clothes tightly about him, and jumped boldly into the lake of the serpent king. Kalinga, hearing the sound, quickly came out. He and many other serpents bit

Krishna with their poisonous teeth.

Even amidst the coils of the serpents Krishna was dancing gracefully upon the hood of Kalinga. Many bruises were inflicted on Kalinga, and he bled very much ; but the female snakes offered prayers to Krishna and requested him to spare the life of Kalinga. Krishna took pity on them and commanded all of them to leave the river Jumna and to go to the sea. Krishna's friends admired his valour, and all of them returned home.

One evening while Krishna and his friends were amusing themselves in leaping and jumping, the demon Arishta, a friend

of Kamsa, came to the spot in the form of a wild bull and frightened all the cows. He also destroyed hermits and ascetics daily in the forests. Now with his huge hump, he came pointing his horns at Krishna. Hari calmly seized him by the horns, squeezed his throat and killed him.

On another occasion Keshin, another demon, having received the commands of Kamsa, set off to Gokula with the intention of destroying Krishna. He came in the shape of a horse, kicking the earth with his hoofs. The cowherds heard him neigh, and were struck with terror. They fled to Govinda for safety. But, Krishna

boldly attacked him and tore him to pieces.

Again, Kamsa instructed the heroic Akrura to go to Gokula and bring the two boys to him. Akrura at once set off in his quick travelling-car and arrived at Nanda's house. Being a pious man, he prostrated before Rama and Krishna, and told them of his mission. The two princes were willing to pay a visit to Kamsa's palace. As they proceeded along the high road, they met a young girl named Kubja who had a humpback. She was carrying a pot of scented ointment to Kamsa. Krishna took a sufficient quantity of the ointment from her and cured her deformity.

When Kamsa heard of the arrival of the two cowherd boys, he ordered his expert boxers to be prepared for a match. His state elephant was stationed at the gate of the arena to kill the two boys. Krishna broke open the skull of the elephant Kuvalayapeetha with his club, and entered the arena with the tusks in his hands. The contest was long and vigorous but at last both Chanura and Mushtika, the King's boxers were slain. Kamsa commanded his men to put the two victorious cowherds to death. Upon hearing these orders, Krishna laughed at Kamsa, and sprang on to his throne, caught hold of his hair and threw him

off his seat. Then casting him down upon the earth, Govinda threw himself upon him and crushed him till he died. Thus ended the life of the violent monarch Kamsa. Krishna then liberated Ugrasena from prison and placed him on the throne.

Jarasandha, the father-in-law of Kamsa, collected a large army and marched against Gokula, determined to put the two youths to death. Hari, with his bow, and Balarama, with his plough, easily defeated their enemy.

One day, Indra came to Dwaraka and requested Krishna saying, "Oh! Saviour, a demon called Naraka inflicts great

injuries upon all creatures, carrying off maidens, saints and kings. He shuts them up in his own palace. You can best determine how it is to be prevented." Hari seated himself upon Garuda and flew to Narakasura's town. There a fierce battle took place with the troops of Naraka. Govinda destroyed thousands of those vile beings. At last when Naraka came into the field, Hari cut him in two with his mighty discus. Then he set free all the imprisoned people and returned to Dwaraka.

Krishna wanted to marry Rukmini, the daughter of Bhishmaka. Her brother Rukmin was against this marriage, for he wanted his sister to marry Sisu-

pala, a rich prince. A quarrel arose between Krishna and Rukmin, in which Rukmin was disfigured by Krishna, and Sisupala was severely beaten. He then married Rukmini and lived happily.

Sisupala, the unrighteous monarch, again attacked Vishnu.

One day Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandavas, performed the Rajasuya-sacrifice, in which he offered the first seat to Krishna and praised him. Sisupala, being a valiant monarch, became offended at this, and abused both Yudhishtira and Krishna. Krishna took the opportunity of slaying him with his discus, and explained to the assembly the previous

births of Sisupala as Hiranyakasipu and Ravana.

After this, Krishna helped the Pandavas in their war against the Kurus. He put an end to the lives of many wicked men and placed on the throne Yudhishthira the Good.



BALARAMAVATAR

9. BALARAMAVATAR

This story tells only of one portion of Vishnu's deeds when he came upon earth as the elder brother of Krishna. He was born as the son of Rohini, and was brought up by Nanda. Balarama and Krishna were always together laughing and playing sometimes with each other, and at other times with the cow-boys, when they drove the calves to pasture. They were so much attached to each other that the one could not eat or sleep without the other. Rama helped Krishna very often in fulfilling the purpose of Krishna's descent upon earth.

Rama and Krishna, on one occasion, were tending the flocks

and herds. They came to a pleasant grove of palms. Dhenuka a demon-friend of Kamsa, was living there, feeding upon the flesh of deer. Seeing the trees loaded with ripe fruit, Rama shook the trees so that the fruit might fall to the ground. Hearing the noise, the fierce demon, in the form of an ass, hastened to the spot in great anger. He kicked Rama with his hind legs. Rama, however, seized him by his legs and whirled him round and round till he died. Hence forward, the cattle grazed without any trouble in the palm-grove.

Rama and Krishna often wandered through the bushes,

amusing themselves with sports, such as swinging from branches or boxing. An Asura, by name Pralamba, saw them and appeared in the shape of a shepherd boy. He also asked if he could join them at play. They agreed and had a three-legged race. Rama's partner was Pralamba. According to the rules of the game Pralamba had to carry Rama, who was the winner, on his shoulders. The villain ran away with Rama, with the idea of devouring him. But Rama was not going to allow that. He increased his weight, and squeezed the demon between his knees. He also struck him on his head until he beat out both his eyes, and the demon died.

When the two brothers were ordered by Kamsa to wrestle with Chanura and Mushtika, Rama attacked the latter, and strangled him to death. Sunama, who came forward to wrestle on behalf of his brother Kamsa, was also treated in the same way by Balarama.

During the marriage of Aniruddha, Rukmin, the grandfather of the bride, played a game of dice with Balarama. Rama lost the game several times. Rukmin and his friends laughed at him. Rama was exceedingly angry with Rukmin; and he played for the last time and won the game. But Rukmin would not accept it. Rama became very much excited

and struck Rukmin with the dice board itself and killed him. Many other princes including Dantavakra an old adversary of Vishnu who took part in scolding Rama also shared the same fate.

Here is one more exploit performed by the mighty Balarama. Dvividha, a great monkey friend of Narakasura, who was interrupting all religious rites, caused the death of many good and wise people. He set fire to the forests, to villages and to towns. The whole world was upset by this wretched monkey and was not able to study or worship.

He even stole the plough, the favourite weapon of Balarama.

Rama heard of this and seizing his club hurled it at his foe. The monkey was killed instantaneously. The gods from above threw down a shower of flowers upon Balarama and praised him for the great help he rendered to the world. Many such mighty deeds were done by Baladeva to lighten the burden of the earth.

10. KALKI-AVATAR

Yudhishtira the Wise was appointed as the sovereign of the earth after Krishna and Balarama returned to heaven. He maintained peace and justice. His subjects were true to God, king and country. But Yudhishtira became very tired of his long stay on earth. So, he with his brothers abdicated the kingdom and went to heaven. As there was no lawful king to rule over them, the people began to do as they liked. Many rulers arose who were given to falsehood and wickedness. These rulers caused the death of helpless women, children and animals. The Gods and the sages witnessed all these evils from heaven.



KALKI-AVATAR

A sage by name Maitreya once said to his great preceptor Parasara, "Most learned Sire! Is there no one to punish the evil-doers on earth? Will not Narayana cause the death of those who do not keep the law?" The Guru replied, "I will answer your questions. Since Yudhishtira's disappearance from the earth the Kali-age commenced. In this age, people will commit sins. Their lives will be short, they will have no devotion to God, and religious learning will be rare. There will be very little rain, and food-stuffs will be very scarce. There will even come a time when people will be glad to feed upon honey, herbs, roots, fruits, leaves and flowers. There will be no

security for persons over property. Everybody will lead a reckless life, devoid of morality and religion. Terrible famine and disease will devastate the earth. Theft and deceit will prevail everywhere. Youths will disregard the rules of studentship and respect for the teacher. Men will refrain from worshipping the Supreme Being.

“In this confused state of affairs, the Supreme Being will descend upon earth at the request of the goddess Earth. He will be born in the family of Vishnu-yasas in the Sambala village of North India, as Kalki. He will undertake the ordinary duties of a man. He will study all the Vedas

under a learned preceptor. By performing a penance he will obtain some weapons and a mighty horse from Siva. A great army of mighty warriors will follow him.

Kalki will marry Padmavati, the incarnate Lakshmi, and will have many dutiful sons. The two survivors of the Ikshwaku race, by name Maru and Devapi, who have been meditating upon Vishnu in the dens of the Himalayas, will also join Kalki. They will marry the two daughters of a king named Visakhayoopu.

When all these are living happily some aggrieved sages from the Himalayas will go and tell Kalki about the evil deeds of

Krodhari, a Rakshasi residing under the waters of the Ganges. Kalki, the up-holder of the good, will take this opportunity to ride on his horse to the river Ganges. Krodhari will be encountered and slain. Then the other powerful adversaries of Vishnu will fall a prey to Kalki. Kalki will also destroy all other sinful creatures. He will then re-establish righteousness upon earth, and the minds of those who live at the end of the Kali age shall be awakened and shall be pure.

The new race will live in an age of purity to be known as Krita-yuga. Leaving the earth to enjoy perfect peace and happiness, Kalki will depart to heaven."



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